

# CORE Connection

News from Lutheran CORE

August 2010

## Convocation to give life to new church body for confessional Lutherans in North America

*Convocation to set future directions for NALC and Lutheran CORE*

More than 1,000 Lutherans from throughout North America will gather Aug. 26-27 in suburban Columbus, Ohio, to form a new church body for confessional Lutherans in North America.

The annual Convocation of Lutheran CORE will adopt a constitution and proposals that will give birth to the North American Lutheran Church.

“The NALC will embody the center of Lutheranism in America. The NALC will uphold confessional principles dear to Lutherans including a commitment to the authority of the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions. Members and congregations of the NALC will have direct involvement in the decisions and life of the NALC,” said the Rev. Mark Chavez of Landisville, Pa., director of Lutheran CORE.

Provisional leaders for the NALC, including a bishop, will be elected at the Convocation. The provisional leaders will be elected for one-year terms to allow those who join the NALC to elect their own leaders at its first annual meeting.

The Convocation will take place at Grove City Church of the Nazarene in Grove City, Ohio. This church was chosen because its very large facility will enable as many Lutherans as possible to be a part of this historic event.

### A way to move forward together

The proposals to be considered by the Convocation have been designed to provide a way for Lutherans who uphold Biblical teaching to move forward together.

In addition to creating the NALC, Lutheran CORE’s 2010 Convocation will also consider proposals for the continuation of Lutheran CORE as “a confessional and confessing unity movement” for confessional Lutherans regardless of church body affiliation.

“These proposals are a way for those who uphold traditional Christian teaching — both those who are leaving the ELCA or the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and those who will remain in those bodies — to remain in fellowship and to work together,” said Chavez. “We are committed to helping traditional Lutherans in North America to remain united in faith and mission.”

“The future that we envision for confessing Lutherans in North America is one that is centered on the absolute truth of Christ Jesus and committed to making disciples for Him,” said Ryan Schwarz of Washington, D.C., chair of Lutheran CORE’s Vision and Planning Working Group. “Both Lutheran CORE and the NALC will stand in continuity with the tradition of the Christian Church over the past 2,000 years and will orient their activities primarily for

the support of congregations in their ministries.”

“Lutheran CORE and the new NALC are two pathways for faithful, confessing Lutherans in North America to remain connected to each other and to the vast majority of Lutherans and Christians globally who reject the theological innovations of the ELCA and ELCIC,” he added.

The NALC will be a member of Lutheran CORE and will do much of its mission and ministry in conjunction with Lutheran CORE to help maintain unity among confessional Lutherans and to carry out mission and ministry efficiently.

Both Lutheran CORE and the NALC will be centered on four key attributes: Christ-Centered; Mission-Driven; Traditionally-Grounded, and Congregationally-Focused.

Lutheran CORE’s 2009 Convocation Sept. 25-26, 2009, in Fishers, Ind., asked that a proposal for the “reconfiguration of North American Lutheranism” be prepared and brought to the 2010 Convocation. In response, “A Vision and Plan for The North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran CORE, a Community of Confessing Lutherans” was released in February.

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# Lutheran CORE to continue as unity movement

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The Rev. Paull Spring of State College, Pa., chair of Lutheran CORE, noted that Lutheran CORE and the NALC are committed to faithfully teaching the historic Christian faith as it has been confessed by Lutherans but also to moving forward in faith and mission.

“We have a great opportunity before us. We not only want to look back toward the past, but to look ahead to the mission God has given us — to confess Christ faithfully, to witness to others, and to grow in God’s mission. This is our opportunity now in Lutheran CORE and in the North American Lutheran Church,” said Spring, who is nominated for election as the NALC’s provisional bishop for one year.

“The North American Lutheran Church places great emphasis on congregational ministry and congregational renewal.” Spring said. “We know that the congregation is not the sole form of ministry in the church. But the congregation is surely the chief community of faith for ministry and renewal. We are hoping that our congregational focus will be evident in the way we carry out our ministry.”

“We are inspired by the groundswell of congregations interested in joining the NALC, as well as the other Lutheran and Christian church bodies interested in discussing fellowship and shared ministry opportunities with the NALC,” Schwarz said.

“Our common commitment to Christ’s Great Commission — making disciples of all nations — is a firm foundation for continued growth of the NALC, broader unity through Lutheran CORE, and building of church-to-church relationships in coming years.”

## Changes in ELCA caused divisions

Lutherans throughout the United States have been reacting to recent actions by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America reversing the ELCA’s policy on pastors in same-sex sexual relationships. ELCA pastors are now allowed to be in same-sex relationships and to officiate at same-sex union ceremonies.

The ELCA Churchwide Assembly approved a social statement in August 2009 that changed ELCA teaching on sexuality and authorized a reversal in policy regarding pastors in same-sex relationships. The official changes in ELCA policy happened when new standards for ministers were approved by the ELCA Church Council in April.

Those involved with Lutheran CORE note that the problems in the ELCA are really not about sexual behavior but rather about an ongoing movement away from the authority and teaching of the Bible throughout the ELCA.

As an example of the changes in the theology of the ELCA, some have pointed to a synod-sponsored worship service July 25 in San Francisco that received seven gay, lesbian, and transgender persons as ELCA pastors. Biblical language for God was removed from the liturgy. Parts of the service addressed God as *mother* and used female pronouns for God. The service began with an ELCA bishop “confessing” the sins of “our church” when it upheld Biblical teaching on sexuality.

“It was not our choice to leave the ELCA, but the ELCA has chosen to reject the faith once delivered to the saints, so now we are acting to maintain our position within the consensus of the Church catholic,” said Schwarz.

“Individuals and congregations are considering how they can remain faithful and be good stewards of the resources that God has given them. Lutheran CORE will seek to help faithful members of the ELCA and ELCIC to continue to uphold the authority of Scripture in an increasingly challenging environment, while the North American Lutheran Church offers a denominational home for those congregations who discern that they can be better stewards of God’s gifts in a new church body,” he added.

The ELCA decisions have created a crisis in many congregations. 504 congregations have already taken first votes to leave the ELCA. Of those, 348 passed and 156 failed to receive the required two-thirds majority, the ELCA reported on Aug 4. In order to end their ELCA affiliation, a second vote is required at least 90 days later. 199 of 212 congregations that have taken second votes have attained the two-thirds majority.

Some ELCA congregations have already voted to join the NALC even though the church body does not yet exist. Many more congregations are expected to join as the NALC takes shape. More than 275 congregations have joined Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ since August of 2009. LCMC is an association of Lutheran churches. Lutheran CORE and the NALC have committed to a close working relationship with LCMC. Congregations can be members of both LCMC and the NALC.

Individuals are encouraged to register for the Convocation to insure that they will receive the two meals that are included in the \$35 registration fee. Late registrations are possible, but meals cannot be guaranteed.

# Conference is 'seeking new directions for Lutheranism'

"Seeking New Directions for Lutheranism: Biblical, Theological, and Churchly Perspectives" is the theme of the Lutheran CORE theological conference Aug. 24-26. More than 800 people have registered for the conference.

Featured speakers for the theological conference include some of the most significant Lutheran scholars in America.

The theological conference will be held at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church's Mill Run campus in Hilliard (suburban Columbus), Ohio. It will precede Lutheran CORE's 2010 Convocation in Grove City, Ohio.

"This theological conference will reaffirm the original aim of Lutheranism to be a reforming movement within the whole Church, that is both evangelical in preaching and orthodox in doctrine. Each of the presenters will focus on a particular article of faith at risk in Lutheranism today and spell out what we confess on the basis of Holy Scripture, the ancient Creeds, and the Lutheran Confessions," the conference brochure explains.

"We invite all Lutherans in North America to come together to reclaim the great tradition that witnesses faithfully to Jesus Christ, builds his Church on earth, and proclaims the Gospel of salvation to the nations."

"The decisions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on human sexuality and ministry policies that contradict what the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church has confessed down through the centuries

and across all cultures highlight the theological crisis in Lutheranism in North America. However, the fact that the ELCA is willing to allow pastors to be in same-sex relationships is only the tip of the iceberg. There is a deep and pervasive underlying problem: a culture-conforming theology alien to the classical Christian tradition that has invaded major sectors of the ELCA," the brochure explains.

Conference presentations include:

***Lutheranism at the Crossroads:  
Theological Imperatives  
for the Future***

The Rev. Dr. Carl E. Braaten

***The Unresolved Problem  
of Authority Between the Times***

The Rev. Dr. Paul R. Hinlicky

***The Authority and Interpretation  
of the Bible in the Church***

The Rev. Dr. Stephen J. Hultgren

***Renewing the Moral Vision  
for Lutheranism***

Dr. Robert Benne

***Speaking To, Of, and For  
the Triune God***

The Rev. Dr. Robert W. Jenson

***You Cannot Be the Church of  
Christ without Christ***

The Rev. Dr. Steven D. Paulson

***Mission Renewal:  
Gospel Roots with Global Reach***

The Rev. Dr. Paul V. Martinson

***What Does All This Mean  
for Our Future?***

Audience Response

Led by Ryan Schwarz

An optional evening banquet featuring the Rev. Dr. Gemechis D. Buba is set for Wednesday, Aug. 25. Registration for the banquet closed when the 500-person maximum capacity of the banquet facility was reached.

The Rev. Dr. James Nestingen was to speak at the banquet, but he will be unable to do so because he will be in Germany for his son's wedding.

The registration fee is \$95 per person. Registration information is available online at Lutheran CORE's website. You may register at the conference.

## NALC on DVD

A DVD presentation on the new North American Lutheran Church (NALC) is now available. The DVD features members of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee talking about the NALC. It is designed for use by congregations and individuals in telling the story of the new Lutheran church body.

Those who attend the Lutheran CORE Convocation will receive a complimentary copy of the DVD thanks to the generosity of a donor.

Individuals and congregations may order a DVD by sending an e-mail with their name, mailing address and phone number to [nalcdvd@popp.net](mailto:nalcdvd@popp.net).

You may also mail your request to:  
Lutheran CORE  
Attn: NALC DVD  
2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220  
New Brighton, MN 55112-2202

Please do not call to order a DVD.

# Nominees announced for Lutheran CORE, NALC

*Paul Utring nominated for Lutheran CORE moderator; Paull Spring for NALC bishop*

Nominees for leadership positions in Lutheran CORE and for the North American Lutheran Church have been announced.

The nominations were made by the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee. Additional nominations may be made at the Convocation. Biographical information on the candidates is available on Lutheran CORE's website.

The Rev. Paul Utring of Columbus, Ohio, has been nominated for the position of Moderator of Lutheran CORE. Pastor Utring is the senior pastor of Upper Arlington Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ohio.

The Rev. W. Stevens Shipman of Lock Haven, Pa., is nominated for secretary of Lutheran CORE. Pastor Shipman currently serves as secretary of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee.

Ralph Whittenburg of South Bend, Ind., has been nominated as treasurer of Lutheran CORE.

Lutheran CORE's moderator, treasurer and secretary will be elected for two-year terms.

There are 11 nominees for the eight two-year terms on the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee:

✝ Challa Baro, Minneapolis, Minn.

✝ The Rev. Wendy Berthelsen, Cedar Hill, Texas.

✝ The Rev. Don Brandt, Salem, Ore.

✝ Capt. Raymond Brown, Londonderry, N.H.

✝ The Rev. Karl Johnsen, Edmonton, Alberta.

✝ Lynn Kickingbird, Edmond, Okla.

✝ The Rev. Dennis Nelson, West Covina, Calif.

✝ The Rev. Eddy Perez, Miami, Fla.

✝ John Pleuss, Madison, Wis.

✝ The Rev. Donna Smith, Champaign, Ill.

✝ Karen Stack, Stillwater, Minn.

## North American Lutheran Church

The Rev. Paull Spring of State College, Pa., current chair of Lutheran CORE, has been nominated to serve as the provisional bishop of the NALC for one year. Spring is the former bishop of the ELCA's Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod. He will not be available for re-election to a full term.

The 2010 Lutheran CORE Convocation will elect a slate of provisional leaders to serve the NALC during its first year.

In addition to electing the provisional bishop, the Lutheran CORE Convocation will elect a provisional Executive Council and Court of Adjudication for one-year terms.

The NALC's first Convocation in 2011 will elect its bishop and Executive Council and a Court of Adjudication for staggered terms.

Four lay people and four clergy will be elected to the NALC Executive Council. Seven members of the Court

of Adjudication will also be elected. Here are the nominees:

## Executive Council - Lay

✝ James Hansen, Charleston, W.Va.

✝ Carol Lattier, Tyler, Texas

✝ Ryan Schwarz, Washington, D.C.

✝ Kay Weaver, Vale, N.C.

## Executive Council - Clergy

✝ The Rev. Donald Allman, Grove City, Ohio

✝ The Rev. Amanda Grimmer, Abington, Pa.

✝ The Rev. Victor Langford, Seattle, Wash.

✝ The Rev. Jim Lehmann, Thomasboro, Ill.

## Court of Adjudication

✝ Richard Currey, Colorado Springs, Colo.

✝ Jon Evans, Pittsburgh, Pa.

✝ Jim Gale, Washington, D.C.

✝ The Rev. Jeffray Greene, Rantoul, Ill.

✝ The Rev. Ralph Kempinski, Aiken, S.C.

✝ Carolyn Nestingen, St. Paul, Minn., and Dallas, Ore.

✝ The Rev. Ron Warren, Grove City, Ohio.

# Amendments proposed for Lutheran CORE constitution

Amendments to Lutheran CORE's constitution have been proposed by the L-CORE Steering Committee. The amendments will be considered by the Convocation Aug. 26-27.

The constitution and the proposed amendments are posted on Lutheran CORE's website.

Proposed amendments explain that Lutheran CORE is a "a community of Confessing Lutherans" and explain that Lutheran CORE is "a confessional and confessing *unity* movement for all Lutherans who identify with the purposes of Lutheran CORE."

One amendment clarifies some confusion around language in the constitution that describes Lutheran CORE as "a free-standing synod." The proposed amendment describes Lutheran CORE as "an association, not a church body, providing a sense of Christian community and Lutheran identity."

An amendment to the Confession of Faith in the constitution adds a quotation from the Lutheran Confessions to further emphasize that "all doctrines should and must be judged" by the Scriptures.

The text of the Common Confession is to be moved from the Confession of Faith in the constitution to an appendix to the constitution.

An amendments clarifies that church bodies may be members of Lutheran CORE. Augsburg Lutheran Churches has joined Lutheran CORE. The North American Lutheran Church will also be a member of Lutheran CORE, and other church bodies may join.

An amendment notes that "Lutheran CORE shall maintain a close relationship in ministry and mission with the North American Lutheran Church."

A part of that joint relationship will be a "Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine." "The Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine shall consider topics of a theological nature, implement theological conferences as may be appropriate, draft statements of a theological nature, and may recommend the adoption of statements by the appropriate bodies of Lutheran CORE and the North American Lutheran Church. Additionally, the Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine will provide guidance to Lutheran CORE and the North American Lutheran Church on ecumenical matters and will provide educational and other resources that will interpret the ministries of Lutheran CORE and the North American Lutheran Church," the proposed amendment states.

Also recommended is a Council of Renewal Movements within Lutheran CORE "which shall meet at least annually for the purpose of mutual support and sharing information."

An amendment changes the term limit for Steering Committee members to three two-year terms rather than two.

Amendments are also proposed for Lutheran CORE's Statement of Purpose. If adopted, the revised section would list these purposes:

✚ Strengthen the renewal of personal faith and congregational life, and foster a sense of churchly community

and identity among its supporters and partners.

✚ Serve as a community of faith for its members, nurturing a dimension of the church as a larger Christian fellowship and fostering mutual support and encouragement in the Christian faith among its members.

✚ Support and counsel all individual members who seek to live in accord with Biblical and confessional teachings and practices in their churches and in the world.

✚ Be an advocate and prophetic voice to churches within the Lutheran community, and work for reform and renewal under the Word of God.

✚ Cooperate with Lutheran churches and entities and support ministries within them; conduct joint ministries with Lutheran church bodies; and, as may be needed, provide alternate resources for congregational life in worship, Christian education, and youth ministry.

✚ Work for the outreach of the Gospel, following the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) as a priority in the life of Lutheran CORE.

✚ Develop a means for ongoing theological reflection and conversation on issues related to Holy Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and personal and social ethics.

✚ Provide counsel to congregations and individuals in their financial support for the mission of the Church, encouraging support for ministries that are reflective of Lutheran CORE's convictions and commitments.

# Lutheran CORE leader reflects on LWF Assembly

*The Rev. Paull Spring of State College, Pa., chair of Lutheran CORE, and the Rev. Victor Langford III of Seattle, Wash., a member of the Steering Committee, represented Lutheran CORE at the Lutheran World Federation Assembly. Bishop Spring offers these reflections on the LWF assembly.*

**By Bishop Paull Spring**  
*Lutheran CORE Chair*

Pastor Victor Langford and I attended the Lutheran World Federation Assembly July 20-27 in Stuttgart, Germany. I will leave it to others to report on details, business and other activities of assembly.

I was struck by how significant to the assembly was the dominance of issues such as gender equality, climate

control and the environment, but rather less concern for evangelism and theology.

An exception was the very gifted and nuanced keynote address by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. He covered very carefully the needs for applying daily bread, but he then connected it very well with solid Biblical content and gave a very telling and impressive presentation.

Rather striking was the virtual absence of any public discussion on the other issues that are deeply troubling the Lutheran family: namely, the blessing of same-sex unions and the ordination of practicing gay and lesbian persons. Numerous conversations on this issue characterized private conversations, but there was almost no mention of this issue publicly.

For me, the most positive experience was opportunity to engage in conversation with numerous leaders from Africa and the Baltic. In particular, bishops and church leaders from Tanzania, Ethiopia, Malawi, Madagascar, and Lithuania.

All of them expressed strong support for the work of Lutheran CORE and the North American Lutheran Church (NALC), and offered to help us in any way. One possibility was a careful consideration of some form of a consultation between NALC and the African leaders for January or February 2011 in Africa, when specific issues could be considered.

All of them asked me to assure the Lutheran CORE family of their daily prayers for our work and ministry.

## Tanzanian and Ethiopian leaders elected to LWF council

Two of the most significant church leaders in Africa were elected to the Lutheran World Federation Council by the LWF Assembly July 20-27 in Stuttgart, Germany.

The Rev. Dr. Alex Gehaz Malasusa, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, and the Rev. Dr. Wakseyoum Idosa, president of the 5.28-million member Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, were elected to the council.

Bishop Malasusa was also elected by the council as a vice president of the LWF. The LWF has seven vice presidents representing each of its seven regions. Malasusa is the Vice President from Africa.

Both Bishop Malasusa and President Idosa have been leaders in denouncing the acceptance of same-sex sexual relationships by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Church of Sweden in spite of the teaching of the Bible. Their election means that the 18.5 million Lutherans in Africa will have strong and faithful representation on the LWF council.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania is the second largest Lutheran Church in the world with 5.3 million members. The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus is the third largest Lutheran Church in the world with 5.28 million members. Both churches have issued statements affirming Biblical teaching on

marriage and denouncing the ELCA's actions.

The LWF council will address the sexuality issues in 2012 when a five-year study will be completed.

The Tanzanian bishops prepared the "Dodoma Statement" in April noting their opposition to the ELCA and Swedish actions affirming same-sex unions. The statement is available online at [www.elct.org](http://www.elct.org).

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus has consistently affirmed Biblical teaching on marriage and rejected same-sex sexual relationships. Its council recently reaffirmed the church's faith commitments.

# Representatives of Lutheran Churches in Africa, Anglican, LCMC, LCMS to attend Convocation

Two of the largest Lutheran churches in the world are among the church bodies that are sending official representatives to Lutheran CORE's Convocation Aug. 26-27.

"The presence at our convocation of so many ecumenical and international guests is very significant," said the Rev. Paull Spring, chair of Lutheran CORE.

"Their presence among us is a reminder that we are not alone in our ministry and that we intend to forge strong ties and relationships with other Christian communities as we go forward in the North American Lutheran Church," he added.

Two bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania are attending as official representatives of the ELCT Presiding Bishop, the Rev. Dr. Alex Gehaz Malasusa; the Rev. Dr. Benson Bagonza, bishop of the ELCT's Karagwe Diocese, and the Rev. Dr. Owdenburg M. Mdegella, bishop of the ELCT's Iringa Diocese.

Bishop Bagonza will preach at the closing worship of the Convocation. Both bishops will participate in the installation of newly-elected leaders of Lutheran CORE and the North American Lutheran Church. The 5.3-million member Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania is the second largest Lutheran church in the world.

The Rev. Francis Stephanos, President Emeritus of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and former Vice President of the Lutheran World Federation, will address the Convo-

cation on behalf of the 5.28 million Lutherans in Ethiopia. The EECMY is the third largest Lutheran church in the world.

Both African Lutheran churches have been supportive of Lutheran CORE and have taken stands against the actions of the ELCA in changing its teaching and policy on same-sex sexual relationships in spite of the teaching of the Bible.

The Rev. Larry Lindstrom, pastor of St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Farmersville, Ohio, will address the Convocation on behalf of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC). Pastor Lindstrom is chair of the LCMC Board of Trustees.

LCMC, Lutheran CORE, and the NALC have committed to an ongoing close working relationship. LCMC is an association of congregations that many ELCA churches have joined over the last year. More than 275 congregations have joined LCMC since last August.

The Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) will be represented by four of its bishops: the Rt. Rev. Ray R. Sutton of Dallas, Texas, bishop co-adjutor of the Diocese of Mid-America and chair of the church's Ecumenical Relations Task Force; the Rt. Rev. Roger Ames, bishop of the Diocese of the Great Lakes; the Rt. Rev. Winfield Mott, bishop co-adjutor of the Diocese of the West; and the Rt. Rev. Wesley L. Nolden, bishop co-adjutor of the Missionary Diocese of the Central States. Bishop Sutton will greet the convocation on behalf of Anglicans in North America.

ACNA unites some 100,000 Anglicans in 700 parishes in 28 dioceses, into a single church. Many ACNA members left The Episcopal Church in the United States and the Anglican Church in Canada as those church bodies moved away from Biblical teaching.

The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod will be represented by the Rev. Larry Vogel, associate director of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations.

The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod's national convention voted in July to "commend groups such as WordAlone, Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC), Lutheran CORE, and others for their courage and faithfulness in opposing the ELCA's recent decision" and to "provide encouragement to other Lutheran church bodies as they strive to remain faithful to confessional Lutheranism."

The Roman Catholic Church will be represented by the Rev. James Massa, Executive Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Religious Affairs.

Father Massa is the lead staff for Lutheran-Catholic relations for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. He also represented Roman Catholics at the 2009 ELCA Church-wide Assembly.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will be represented by the Rev. Marcus Kunz, ELCA Executive for Discernment of Contextual and Theological Issues, and Myrna Sheie, ELCA Executive for Governance and Institutional Relations.

# Provisional constitution for NALC to be considered

A provisional constitution for the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) will be considered by Lutheran CORE's Convocation on Friday, Aug. 27.

The draft constitution is the work of a Constitution Task Force gathered by Lutheran CORE. It is available on Lutheran CORE's website.

"This constitution is provisional. The task force was asked to develop an interim document that can guide the life of the NALC during its formative year," explained Ryan Schwarz, chair of the Constitution Task Force and vice chair of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee.

"The congregations that join the NALC, not Lutheran CORE, will ultimately decide the shape of a permanent constitution to guide their common life, which we expect will be enacted via constitutional amendments

at the first NALC convocation in 2011," he added.

The draft provisional constitution was built on the "Vision and Plan" document published by Lutheran CORE in February.

Schwarz explained that there are at least two significant new concepts in the proposed constitution that were not included in the "Vision and Plan": "The addition of a General Secretary, who will be a sort of chief operating officer or chief administrator for the NALC (an idea we have borrowed from the Lutheran churches in Africa), and the addition of a Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine (joint between Lutheran CORE and the NALC) which will serve as a theological advisory and guidance board for the new church body."

The proposed constitution notes that the Convocation will elect provisional

officers for the NALC for one-year terms. This will allow the members of the NALC to elect their own leaders for full terms next year.

The Confession of Faith in the constitution is identical to that of Lutheran CORE. It clearly affirms the NALC's commitment to Scripture, the creeds, and the Lutheran Confessions. It also notes that "the NALC honors and accepts The Common Confession (2005) . . . as a summary of teachings otherwise affirmed in the Lutheran Confessions."

Members of the task force which prepared the proposed constitution are: James Gale of Washington, D.C.; Pastor Jeffray Greene of Rantoul, Ill.; Gov. Al Quie of Minnetonka, Minn.; Bishop Ken Sauer of Columbus, Ohio; Ryan Schwarz of Washington, D.C.; Carroll Shaddock of Houston, Texas; and Bishop Paull Spring of State College, Pa.

# Seven Marks Society to hold constituting convocation

The Seven Marks Society will hold its Constituting Convocation Aug. 23-24 at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church in Hilliard, Ohio. The Constituting Convocation is being held prior to the Lutheran CORE theological conference and Convocation.

The Seven Marks Society is "an evangelical catholic ministerium of Lutheran congregations, pastors and laity, committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ through which we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith."

"We exist in mutual support of one another, remaining traditional,

orthodox, confessional and sacramental Lutherans in continuity with the Great Tradition of the Church throughout the ages, respecting the proper role of bishops to defend the faith, the proper role of pastors as stewards of the mysteries of Christ, and the proper role of the laity as missionaries in word and deed. Our mission of the Gospel is within the community of Lutheran Christians, to work cooperatively with other faithful Confessional Lutherans committed to the Gospel which we have received," their website explains.

Elections will be held will be for: Bishop Protector, Vicar, Secretary,

Treasurer and a Member at Large. These five along with the chairs of our four working groups — Theological Education, Missions, Ecumenical Relations and Parish Resources — will form the Board of Directors. A Bishop Protector is a current or retired bishop who will focus on the theological integrity of the Society. The Vicar will be responsible for the day-to-day, administrative tasks of the Society.

"This organization is committed to joining together with Lutheran CORE in the cause to which it has pledged itself — the resurgence of a faithful Lutheran witness in North America."

# 40 days of prayer precede historic Convocation

The leaders of Lutheran CORE have invited Christians around the world to join in 40 days of prayer prior to the Lutheran CORE Convocation.

The days of prayer began on July 19 and continue through Aug. 27, the day the North American Lutheran Church will be constituted.

Devotions and prayers have been prepared for each of the 40 days by members of Lutheran CORE's

Steering Committee and Advisory Council and by pastors and church leaders in North America and around the world.

"The significance of this undertaking to form a new church body must be undergirded by the prayers of God's people, not only in North America but around the world," said the Rev. Rebecca Heber, a member of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee who is coordinating the prayer effort.

"All of us in Lutheran CORE have been encouraged by the support of Christians around the world. We are especially grateful for their prayers and covet their prayers during these 40 days," Pastor Heber said. Heber and her husband, the Rev. Bill Heber, are developing Oasis Church, a new NALC mission congregation in the Orlando, Florida, area.

The devotions and prayers are posted on Lutheran CORE's website.

## Devotion from 40 days of prayer preceding Convocation

*This devotion by Carolyn Nestingen is one of the devotions from the 40 days of prayer preceding the Convocation. All of the devotions are available on Lutheran CORE's website.*

**We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.**

— Romans 14:7-8

Let's get back to basics. We have found disillusionment in the human institution of the church. We have been disappointed to see friends and others we respect find the unity of the church more important than the Biblical word. We have ached as we see congregations split their vote on leaving or staying. All of these things matter to us.

We have been excited seeing a new church, the NALC, beginning to rise this year. We have high hopes for the constituting Convocation at the end of August. We rejoice to worship with

others who share our love of God's Word as the authority for our life. We thank God for newfound friends we have been able to work with on committees to formulate the mission and structure of the new church. All these things matter to us as well.

But Paul reminds us here that we are the Lord's. We don't live to ourselves, but to the Lord. We don't die to ourselves, but to the Lord. Not only that, but our death happened long ago for many of us, over the font, when water was poured or dripped or wiped over us, when we were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and we were named a child of God. We died then and became a new being in Christ.

So the disillusionments, the disappointments, the aching doesn't define us, Christ does. The hopes, joys and thankfulness for a new church don't define us. Christ does. We are the Lord's.

We received heartbreaking news yesterday of a dear friend's death in an

automobile accident. An event like that focuses your mind on what matters. Of course we pray that the NALC will come into existence and be a home for those currently without a church that feels like home. Of course we pray that the NALC will reach out and speak God's Word of grace to people who desperately need it. And we should do so. Yet, we live to the Lord, we die to the Lord, we are the Lord's. Thanks be to God.

**We thank you, dear God, that you have chosen us, loved us, cared for us and sent us out to share your good news wherever we can. We pray that we can do that together in the NALC, that it will be a beacon to sinners and a place where forgiveness is heard and lived. And we thank you most especially that we are yours, in life and in death. Amen.**

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# North American Lutheran Church Q & A

## **Why is the North American Lutheran Church being formed?**

Confessing Lutherans in North America have asked for a new denominational body that is faithful in its preaching and practice to the Holy Bible and to the teachings of the Lutheran Confessions.

## **Why is Lutheran CORE aiding in the formation of the NALC?**

Lutheran CORE's 2009 Convocation asked that a proposal for the "reconfiguration of North American Lutheranism" be prepared and brought to the 2010 Convocation. The NALC is a response to that request.

## **Is the NALC just an anti-ELCA church body?**

No. The NALC is a church body being formed for those members and friends of Lutheran CORE who are leaving the ELCA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada as they have seen those bodies move further from traditional Biblical teaching. But the NALC is much more than a reaction to the errors of other church bodies. The NALC will be a renewed Lutheran community moving forward in faith and mission, focused on living out Christ's Great Commission to go and make disciples. The NALC embodies the center of Lutheranism in America.

## **How will the NALC handle the adoption of teaching statements?**

All teaching statements must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote at a Convocation and ratified by two-thirds of NALC congregations.

## **What is the difference between the NALC and Lutheran CORE?**

The NALC will be a church body. Lutheran CORE is not a church body. Lutheran CORE is a confessing unity movement for Lutherans regardless of their church body affiliation. Lutheran CORE is a way for traditional Lutherans in North America to work together in mission. The NALC will be a member of Lutheran CORE.

## **How does the NALC relate to Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC)?**

The NALC and LCMC are committed to working in close partnership. Some have called the two church bodies fraternal twins. LCMC is a vibrant and faithful association of congregations, rather than a denominational church body. Like LCMC, the NALC will be focused on and do its ministry through congregations, but it will have more of a traditional denominational structure to assist congregations in their mission and ministry and in calling pastoral leadership. Congregations can be members of both NALC and LCMC.

## **Will the NALC work in partnership with Lutherans around the world?**

Yes. The NALC is committed to working in partnership with faithful Lutherans in other parts of the world. As a part of that commitment, the NALC will consider joining the Lutheran World Federation. The NALC will also encourage congregations to enter into partnership relationships with other congregations in North America and around the world and will help to facilitate those relationships.

## **Will the NALC have a bishop?**

Yes. The NALC will be led by a bishop, whose role will be pastoral and theological rather than administrative. The bishop will conduct a ministry of visitation throughout the NALC and will promote the mission of the church. The bishop will also lead NALC inter-Lutheran and ecumenical dialogues. Regional Deans, who may also serve as pastors of local congregations, will work with the bishop to provide oversight and pastoral care to pastors and congregations in their area. A General Secretary will handle NALC administrative and operational functions.

## **Will the NALC have a large bureaucratic structure and a large national headquarters?**

No. The NALC will be very lean structurally, but there will be enough structure to help congregations with their ministries. The NALC will focus on assisting the ministry of congregations, not on congregations assisting the national church body.

## **How will the NALC handle benevolence giving from congregations?**

Congregations will make their own decisions about which ministries to support. The NALC will help congregations find the best ways to support Christ's mission in the world. NALC congregations will be encouraged to support ministries and mission congregations directly rather than through the national headquarters. The NALC will need direct support, especially during its formative years, but ongoing administrative costs will be limited because of the NALC's lean structure.

# ‘Rite of Reception’ shows ELCA changes are about more than accepting same-sex relationships

*Synod service includes goddess elements, deviations from Lord’s Prayer*

A worship service formally receiving seven gay and lesbian persons as ELCA pastors included elements that many Lutherans would find offensive or even heretical.

The elements of the service show that some of the practicing gay and lesbian persons being received as ELCA pastors and some synod bishops deviate from Biblical and traditional expressions and understandings of the Christian faith.

The Sierra Pacific Synod’s “Rite of Reception” service, July 25 at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in San Francisco, formally received as ELCA pastors three practicing gay men and three practicing lesbian women including a woman who identifies herself as “the first openly transgender Lutheran pastor ordained in the United States.” A practicing gay man who was removed from the ELCA clergy roster for violating the denomination’s former standards was reinstated.

Five of those received had been ordained in controversial services held in defiance of the ELCA’s former teaching and standards regarding same-sex sexual relationships.

Three ELCA bishops participated in the service: Bishop Mark Holmerud of the Sierra Pacific Synod, Bishop Dean Nelson of the Southwest California Synod, and Bishop Dave Brauer-Rieke of the Oregon Synod.

Bishop Holmerud began the service by “confessing” the sins of “our church” against gay and lesbian persons. “Our church of the reformation has been too

long captive to bias and misinformation,” Holmerud said. The bishop then read a litany of the church’s sins including:

“We have not respected the gift of sexuality . . . We have not honored faithful and loving promises, marriages, and covenantal relationships. . . . We have not acted quickly enough . . . We have betrayed fellow members of the body of Christ because of cultural prejudice. We have misused Scripture as a tool of discrimination. We have forced celibacy upon too many . . . We have promoted invisibility and dishonesty. . . . We have intimidated and disciplined, censured and expelled.”

Biblical language for God, including *Lord*, was removed from the liturgy. Instead God was called *Mother* and female pronouns were used for God. The service also included elements of pagan and goddess worship reflecting the practice of some of the congregations of the new ELCA pastors.

Perhaps the most offensive element was the use of several versions of “the Lord’s Prayer.” Worshipers were invited to pray “the Prayer of Jesus” “in the language most familiar to you.”

Options included three prayers bearing only slight resemblance to the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to pray. Following are three of the so-called “Prayers of Jesus” from the service. The first is from the “goddess rosary” used by University Lutheran Chapel of Berkeley, Calif., and Ebenezer Lutheran Church of San Francisco — [www.herchurch.org](http://www.herchurch.org).

*Our Mother who is within us we celebrate your many names. Your wisdom come, your will be done, unfolding from the depths within us. Each day you give us all that we need. You remind us of our limits and we let go. You support us in our power and we act in courage. For you are the dwelling place within us, the empowerment around us, and the celebration among us, now and forever. Amen.*

*God, lover of us all, most holy one, help us to respond to you to create what you want for us here on earth. Give us today enough for our needs; forgive our weak and deliberate offenses, just as we must forgive others when they hurt us. Help us to resist evil and to do what is good; For we are yours, endowed with your power to make our world whole. Amen.*

*Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven. The hallowing of your name echo through the universe! The way of your justice be followed by the people of the world! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings! Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth! With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us. From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.*

Internet links to the event are provided on Lutheran CORE’s blog.



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